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To the memory of
Sister Mary Lawrence O'Donovan,
Sister of Mercy.

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FOREWORD

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It is the purpose of this small volume to show the growth of the Catholic Church in Laredo and to present some results of said growth as contributions made to the community.

Character development is the result of the environment of the time, and it was the desire of the early settlers of San Agustin de Laredo to live a good life in accordance with their religious beliefs. Some theses have been written about one of the churches, about one of our Catholic academies, and about the founding of Laredo, but this survey follows the growth of the Catholic Church first with the Spanish monarchical form of government, and then with the government of Texas and of the United States.

Much of the material in this volume is drawn from the Spanish Archives of Laredo, from the "Publicaciones del Archivo General de la Nacion, Tomo I and II, and from personal interviews with the pastors of the different Catholic churches in Laredo.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to the authors who have written books, articles, or theses with reference to Laredo: Herbert Bolton, Frank W. Johnson, Sister Mary Gabrielle, Kathleen DaCamara, Monsignor D. Laning. To the late historian Seb. Wilcox, I am especially grateful for his helpful advice in personal interviews.

Very valuable information was furnished by Father Barnard Doyon, O.M.I. Archivist and Historian of the Oblate Fathers in the Southwest, DeMazenod Scholasticate, San Antonio, Tex. in his letter of Feb. 25, 1953, as well as by Mrs. G. H. Roddy of Corpus Christi, and Mrs. H. L. Nason of Robstown.

Rogelia O. Garcia.

Laredo, Texas.
December 2, 1962.

CHAPTER I

SETTLEMENT OF SAN AGUSTIN DE LAREDO

After subduing the Aztecs and neighboring tribes, the **Conquistadores** were determined to conquer the Indians in the northern part of Mexico and settle the land with Spaniards. As early as 1526, Fray Andres Olmos with a small number of men left Tampico and explored as far north as the Rio Grande. Another effort to explore the northern land was made in 1630, but the Indians were too hostile and for a long time the only settlement on the Gulf coast of Texas was the Presidio de la Bahia del Espiritu Santo.

In 1746 the Viceroy of Mexico commissioned Don Joseph de Escandon, a Spanish officer whose brilliant campaigns against the Indians near Queretaro had won for him the title of Lieutenant of Captain General of the Sierra Gorda, to pacify the Gulf coast country and settle it with Spaniards. The vast territory extended from the Panuco to the Bahia del Espiritu Santo, and Escandon named it the Colonia del Nuevo Santander. His military experience, his kindness to the Indians, and the fairness with which he made his decisions qualified the man for this great work. He was loyal to his King and to his Faith and spent most of his fortune in financing this vast colonization project, for he was determined to conquer and establish the jurisdiction of Spain over the Rio Grande territory.

From 1748 to 1755 more than twenty towns were established under the direction of Colonel Escandon. Camargo was founded on March 5, 1749 and Dolores soon thereafter. On the south side of the Rio Grande, opposite Dolores, Don Thomas Sanchez de la Barrera, Captain of the Royal Army of Spain, had established his ranch and in 1754, while Colonel Escandon was at Revilla Gigedo (the old town of Guerrero), Don Thomas Sanchez requested permission to transport at his own expense the families he had at his ranch to a place across the Rio Grande near a good ford called El Paso de Jacinto. This was to be done only if Colonel Escandon gave them the necessary land.

Don Thomas Sanchez was sent on an expedition to the country around the Nueces River, but the Indians were too hostile and he had to come back. He was finally commissioned to establish a settlement at the point he would choose.

In keeping with this plan, on May 15, 1755 he brought from his ranch three families besides his own and founded the village which he named SAN AGUSTIN DE LAREDO. This was the first independent white settlement in Texas. The Spaniards brought with them not only their wives and children but all their goods, cattle, horses, goats, sheep, and such other things as they needed for their living. They also brought the Catholic faith and their own customs and laws, a heritage which they bequeathed to others who followed them.

Colonel Escandon commissioned Don Thomas as head of the

political and military affairs of the settlement, but no garrison was provided, since the place was founded without any expense to the government. The settlers were dependent only on themselves and they were determined to stay, for they knew that they could make their living by raising livestock. Don Thomas and the men built suitable huts for their dwellings and corrals for their stock.

The location of the village was at a point where two main roads converged, one of which led to San Antonio de Bexar and the other to the Bahia del Espiritu Santo. These helped to give it importance. Within two years the population consisted of eleven families and four single men as follows:

Thomas Sanchez and wife, Catarina Uribe, and 9 children
Juan Garcia Saldivar and wife, Catarina de las Casas
Prudencio Garcia and wife, Josepha Sanchez, and 5 children
Joseph Francisco Garcia and wife, Maria Ritas, and 7 children
Joseph Leonardo Trevino and wife, Ana Moreno, and 6 children
Agustin Sanchez and wife, Francisca Rodriguez and 2 children
Leonardo Sanchez, single
Joseph Flores and 3 children
Joseph Diaz and mother
Joseph Ramon and wife, Maria Gertrudis and 2 children
Leonardo Garcia, single
Joseph Salinas and wife, Isabel Trevino, and 1 child
Juan Diego, single
Pedro Salinas, single, with mother and 1 sister
Juan Bautista Sanchez and wife, Juana Diaz and 10 children

Their possessions consisted of 712 breeding horses, 125 mules, two yokes of oxen, 9080 sheep and goats, and 101 cattle. However, in spite of this growth, Colonel Escandon thought it best that the people continue holding the land in common for a few more years, so as to bring the settlers closer together and thus insure protection for them.

APPORTIONMENT OF THE LAND

In 1767 the General Visit of the Villa de San Agustin de Laredo took place and Don Juan Fernando de Palacio and Don Joseph de Ossorio y Llamas came to apportion the land and lay off the townsite. This was to reward the founder and first settlers according to promises made to them, and in accordance with Chapter Four of the Royal Patent dated at Buenretiro, Spain, on the twenty-ninth of March, 1763. The inhabitants residing on the south side of the river were declared as comprised within the apportionment, at their own request. Don Joseph Prudencio Garcia, a practical surveyor, was to work with Don Domingo Tavoada appointed on the part of His Majesty. The experts selected for judging the land were Miguel Diaz and Juan Bautista Villarreal. Experts appointed from the south side of the river were Don Joseph Martinez de Soto Mayor and Don Thomas de Cuellar. These gentlemen were to judge the lands with reference to fitness for cultivation, for grazing, and for the townsite.

The surveyors then proceeded to survey the town commons and the quantity of land granted to each inhabitant named in the registry. Sixty-seven of the inhabitants on both sides of the river had registered, and each one was to receive **one porcion** which is a tract of land 1,000 varas in width and 30,000 varas in depth. These **porciones** had a water front on the Rio Grande thus providing land suitable for cultivation as well as for grazing purposes, and were numbered so that the settlers could draw by lot. As founder of the village, Captain Sanchez was awarded **two porciones**. Sixty-four of the porciones were drawn by lot as follows:

On the north side of the river:

Porcion No. 10) {

- | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 11 | { Don Thomas Sanchez |
| 12 | { Santiago Sanchez |
| 13 | { Joseph Miguel Garcia |
| 14 | { Joseph Guajardo |
| 15 | { Joseph Prudencio Garcia |
| 16 | { Domingo Garcia |
| 17 | { Joseph Xpral Garcia |
| 18 | { Joseph de Bustamante |
| 19 | { Joaquin Garcia |
| 20 | { Bautista Garcia |
| 21 | { Leonardo Garcia |
| 22 | { Maria de Jesus Garcia |
| 23 | { Leonardo Sanchez |
| 24 | { Toribio Rodriguez |
| 25 | { Juan Francisco Garcia |
| 26 | { Agustin Sanchez |
| 27 | { Dona Maria Gertrudis Sanchez |
| 28 | { Eufemio Martinez |
| 29 | { Juan Bautista Villarreal |
| 30 | { Joseph Francisco Cordova Moreno |
| 31 | { Joseph Trevino |
| 32 | { Antonio Trevino |

33	Joseph Dionisio Trevino
34	Joseph Antonio Diaz
35	Joseph Miguel Diaz
36	Lauriano Salinas
37	Joseph Bartolo Chapa
38	Tadeo Sanchez
39	Joseph Antonio Nasario
40	Manuel Garcia
41	Eufemio Rodrigo Rodriguez
42	Eugenio Sanchez
43	Joseph Cayetano de la Garza
44	Joseph Manuel Albino Martinez
45	Joseph Thomas de Orive

Some of the inhabitants did not come to the drawing, although all had been informed. Pedro Salinas, Joseph Cayetano Salinas, Diego Paz, Dionisio Duran, and Cayetano Pena declared that they did not intend to stay very long in the settlement and so they did not draw for land.

On the south side of the river:

<u>Porcion</u>	No.	
	1	Joseph Antonio Flores
	2	Javier Pena
	3	Joseph Jesus Pena
	4	Miguel Martin
	5	Nicolas de la Garza
	6	Don Thomas de Cuellar, el mayor (Sr.)
	13	Don Pedro Garcia
	14	Salvador Gonzalez Ydalgo
	15	Joachin Cavazos
	16	Blas de Jesus Sanchez
	25	Joseph Thomas de Cuellar
	26	Joseph Martinez de Soto Mayor
	27	Antonio Lopez
	28	Nicolas Campos
	29	Joachin Gutierrez
	30	Francisco Xavier Uribe
	31	Juan Guerra
	32	Blas Trevino
	33	Gervasio Padillos
	34	Francisca de Urive (widow)
	35	Juan Francisco de Orive
	36	Juan Diego Trevino
	37	Carlos Mendiola
	38	Juan Mendiola
	39	Juan Esteban Bosquez
	40	Martin Morales
	42	Marcos Mendiola
	43	Pedro Mendiola

The surveyors then proceeded to select a suitable spot for the public square and building lots for the public buildings to be erected there. They chose a level piece of ground situated in the center of the

settlement. They laid off an oblong piece of land with right angles, and considering the number of inhabitants and their probable increase, they deemed sufficient a length of 100 varas by a depth of 80 varas, including therein the twenty varas on the sides of the four streets, each of which was to be of ten varas in breadth, - "In order to pass unmolested in and out on horseback, the customary exercise of the country."

The public square, or plaza, was surveyed and marked with durable posts, and in the two squares fronting north and south were laid out four lots of twenty varas in front and forty varas in depth. With reference to the other two squares, one fronting east and one west, on the first was to be erected a temple or parish church, for which the necessary space was designated, and adjoining thereto should be built the habitation of the priest. On the other square were to be built the jail and a house for the justice or captain.

Each settler had to build a house on the town lot that fell to his share within the term of two years under the penalty of losing it. It was also stipulated that at no time had the settlers the right to bargain or alienate the same to any persons belonging to the clerical orders, under the same penalty. This provision was probably made so as to assure the permanent settlement of the town to actual people. The territory between the lands assigned to the town and the Nueces River, subject to the jurisdiction of the town, was to form part of the same district which Captain Sanchez wanted to turn into a stock farm, twenty leagues of which he had already improved.

PLANS FOR ERECTING A CHURCH

At the end of every year the householders should elect a **procurador general** who was to look to and protect the interests of the community, but first of all they were to exert themselves to erect a church in the designated place:

... to worship God with greater reverence and piety, applying to this pious and Christian object, if necessary, a portion of the lands set apart for the town, in particular by cultivating the same and applying and expending the produce for the said building. Hereto may be applied also for the present, the money collected at the canoe ferry opposite the town, which money shall be safely deposited, and which ferry we hereby do declare common property of the town, for which reason the householders and inhabitants of the same shall not pay any charges at the crossing, but be responsible for keeping the same in order and for strangers passing the river we fix the charge at **two reales** per head and at one real for each package of freight. After the church has been completed, the proceeds from the ferry shall be deposited for some other use necessary or convenient for the community, but it must not be distributed without the unanimous consent of the Justice, councilman, and the Procurader.

The settlers had built a makeshift chapel to suit their needs for the time being, but they had to work hard for several years to erect the parish church. On August 31, 1768. Don Juan Fernando de Palacio, governor of Nuevo Santander, wrote to Joseph Martinez de Sotomayor, alcalde of San Agustin de Laredo, urging him to do the best he could to start building the more permanent church and to keep him posted on progress made. The governor was of the opinion that

... although we serve God in everything that is just and fair, we serve Him better by building a temple where Christians may worship Him.

Captain Sanchez passed several decrees to increase the fund for building the church. On July 9, 1774. he urged the settlers to build their permanent homes and stated that those not complying would be fined twelve pesos applicable toward the fund for the church. As a result of this decree, Dona Ysabel de la Garza addressed a petition to the governor ad interim on August 11, 1775, which read as follows:

Don Vicente Gonzalez de Santianes,
Governor ad Interim.

Dear Sir:

My son, Don Joseph Joachin Cavazos has been twice cited by the Justice of Laredo to go there and build his home.

Because of the just way in which you govern the province, I have decided to appeal to you in defense of my son.

It is a fact that although my son married a daughter of Uribe he has never resided in Laredo because he had to take care of his father and me. He would go to see his wife the year that she stayed with her parents and again when her child was born. He could not stay in Laredo because he had to work in his stock farm. He has definite proof of where he has been the last nine years.

He never even drove one stake in the land they claim was apportioned to him. I cannot persuade myself that his marriage with a town girl should be cause for his having to live in Laredo, because among the nobility the wife follows her husband. This is illustrated by that Castilian saying: IN CASTILE THE HORSE CARRIES THE SADDLE.

My son never requested land, neither did he authorize anyone to request land for him, nor did he accept it. The land was granted due to the ambition of persons who were not content to request land for themselves, for their children, but asked also for their son-in-law. They even **padded** the statements of livestock in order to get more pasture lands. But the establishment of the Tax Collector's office has revealed the ignorance of those who declared more than what they actually possessed. My son was more cautious. As soon as he could get his wife away from her parents, he came to his home town without even wanting to see the land that they offered him.

I am a widow who, although poor, belong to the nobility. I am seventy-seven years of age and the mother of Joseph Joachim Cavazos. According to the Divine, and to the civil laws of Spain, he has to help me, therefore I pray that you will please order that the Justice may not molest my son any more, and that anyone, who wants to, may take the land mentioned.

May God take care of you.

Salinas, August 11, 1775.

(signed) Your obedient servant,
YSABEL DE LA GARZA.

To further increase the fund for the church, Don Thomas requested that the settlers report to him all horses or mules found to be without owner and he would see that such would be sold.

On October 29, 1789, Don Claudio Lacomba decreed that anyone who brought meat to the settlement without proof of having obtained such meat in a legal way would be fined twelve pesos applicable to the fund for the church. Persons bringing meat to the town, for their own consumption or for sale had to show the brand of the animal, or the ears of same, to the justice.

According to the late Reverend Jesus Prieto, O.M.I., the church was erected in 1778. It was a rock structure and faced south. The priest's habitation was built next to it.

As late as 1761 the settlers of San Agustin de Laredo had to bring the priest from Revilla Gigedo to administer the sacraments. But as a result of the inspection of the towns in his diocese, the bishop of Guadalajara sent a secular priest to Laredo, the Reverend Juan Jose de Lafita y Verri, who ministered to the spiritual welfare of the settlers until 1767, the year when the General Visit was made. It seems that Colonel Escandon was displeased when he learned that a secular priest had been sent. He favored the missionary priests but San Agustin de Laredo was not a mission town. However, Escandon never underrated the importance of the church in his vast project of colonization, and he did all he could to help the spiritual keep pace with the material development of the towns he founded.

MORAL STANDARDS SET BY PRIEST AND JUSTICE

Men of all ages have sought comfort in religion, and the settlers of San Agustin de Laredo did the best they could until a priest was sent to them in 1761. The Reverend Juan Jose Lafita y Verri ministered to their spiritual needs until 1767, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Nicolas de Mendoza Gutierrez. From the beginning, the justice of the town and the priest worked together for the good of the people.

In matters of moral standards the justice was always willing to help the priest. When the latter complained that the settlers did not obey his requests regarding public bathing, a decree was passed prohibiting the bathing of the men and women in the river at the same time. The justice considered the practice dishonest, setting a bad example for the children and "an offense to both their Majesties, God and the King."

At the beating of the drum, the settlers convened in the plaza and the decree was read to them. It stipulated that the women should bathe at sundown and the men after vespers, and anyone disobeying said decree was to be fined six pesos and put in jail for ten days. If any of the girls who were placed in homes by the ecclesiastical judge were found guilty of non-compliance with the order, the justice would place her in another home where she would be properly guided.

Another decree was issued on Sept. 6, 1788 to prohibit scandals against the honor of God, the King, and the public. This decree consisted of four articles as follows:

- I. That no householder having daughters, their own, or those placed with them by the priest, can send the girls to the river, after vespers, to draw water or to wash clothes, because it is a fact that very serious scandals and offenses to God emanate from this practice. Any girl found at the river during late hours of the day will be taken from her home and placed with persons who will take care of her, in order to avoid such offenses to God. The fact that the girl has been placed by the ecclesiastical judge will make no difference.
- II. That no man, without very especial reason, walk by the river after sun down. Anyone disobeying will be punished.
- III. Under no condition can a man talk with the women washing in the river, or drawing water, during the daytime. The penalty is one month in jail and a fine of six pesos, which sum will be applied for the expenses of the church.
- IV. No dances will be held without first getting the necessary license, neither can the musicians play, in any place, without first securing a permit.

Previous to the passage of these two decrees, Don Thomas had ordered all the settlers to be in their homes "one hour after eight o'clock.

The people would be warned of the time by the beating of the drum. No one was to be excepted but the guard who had to patrol the town on horseback, and he was to report immediately if he found anyone out after the stated hour. The penalty for the nobility was to be twelve pesos and fifteen days in jail, and for the plebeians six pesos and one month in jail. The fines were to be collected from the best of their livestock.

Don Diego de Lasaga, Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Army of Nuevo Santander, prohibited the manufacture and sale of mezcal, or **chinguirito**, strictly. Games of chance were also forbidden because: "they are abominable vices and the origin of much ruin."

The justices and the priests were sent copies of a decree issued by Charles III with reference to **MOURNING**. Said decree stipulated that mourning should be worn only for six months in order to avoid inconveniences "to the mourners and to the souls of the deceased." Excessive expenses were to be avoided. With reference to rooms, only the floor and windows of the drawing room where the widows were to receive the sympathy of their friends, were to be covered with black. Black drapes were not allowed on carriages. The fines to be imposed for disobedience to this decree were as follows:

1000 pesos for lighting more candles, than those allowed at the tomb.

500 pesos for draping carriage windows with black cloth.

200 pesos for overdoing their mourning.

On March 17, 1789 the Count of El Valle de Orizaba issued a decree informing all the subjects of the King that His Majesty Charles III had died on December 14, 1788 at a quarter of one in the morning. His son, Charles IV, succeeded him and he requested that all priests celebrate Masses for the repose of the soul of his father, and that all subjects go into mourning for six months. Heads of households, men and women, were to go into mourning four days after the publication of the decree. Children and servants were excepted as were the Indians and those too poor to comply. Charles IV warned his subjects not to overdo their demonstrations of grief. However those persons who could afford to wear black were expected to do so under penalty of fifty pesos as fine for non-compliance.

PRICE CONTROLS

Ceiling on prices was put into effect in San Agustin de Laredo on March 29, 1812, by a decree which reads as follows:

In order to take care of the economy of the village and especially to protect the needy and the poor, I have determined, with the due consent of the councilmen, to fix the prices at which articles of first necessity are to be sold, with reference to weight and measurement in the following way:

- I. Anyone who sells meat must give five pounds for one real, including, of course, the weight of the bone.
- II. Persons who sell candles must give four ounces of finished tallow for half a real.
- III. Those selling bread must give twelve ounces of baked bread for half a real.
- IV. No person can kill cattle in the woods and bring the meat to town. Cattle must be killed in the ranch or in this town.
- V. Those who sell grass will give one-half of an **arroba** for half a real, if the grass is green.

If the grass is dry, then ten pounds will sell for half a real.
- VI. Those who sell wood must not charge over a real and a half for each load.
- VII. Those who sell leaf lard must charge two and half reales per pound, and one and a half reales for tallow.

Those who come to sell cannot do so on a wholesale basis without first retailing for three consecutive days at the plaza. Anyone disobeying any of the articles listed above will be fined twenty-five pesos the first time, double that amount for the second offense, and three times the amount for the third offense. In order that no one may claim ignorance of this order, it is posted in the corner of the plaza.

(signed) Manuel Dovalina,
Sindico Procurador.

EDUCATION UNDER SPAIN

The education of the children was not neglected under the rule of Spain. In this matter the justice and the priest cooperated also. The government issued a decree ordering the establishment of a school, eight days after the decree was received in the villages. All children of school age, up to twelve years, were to be sent to school in order that they might learn how to read and be instructed in the Christian doctrine. Those parents not complying with the decree were to be fined six pesos. The parish priest was given the supervision of the instruction and he was to select a competent teacher.

Provision was also made for the instruction of the Indians. The Marquis de Croix wrote to the Justice of Laredo advising him to see that the priests taught the Spanish language and Christian faith to the Indians "for the better service of God and the King." On a subsequent letter, the Marquis requested that the Indians who could speak Spanish be allowed to take part in the elections.

King Ferdinand VII, through his regency, issued a decree which read in part:

... Education is the basis of man's happiness in society, and the government, realizing its importance, has considered that the better organization of the primary schools is absolutely necessary for it is there that the youth of the nation receive their basic instruction. Therefore a minister has been appointed whose work it is to see that schools and seminaries are established where the Spanish Americans, cultivating their admirable talents, will take their place among the educated people of the other nations of the earth. The colleges, universities, academies and other institutions of learning will help develop the learning acquired in the primary schools

... The government also needs to help the missions in America and Asia to secure the conversion of the Indians so that they may be able to adjust themselves to a civilized way of living.

The Cortes Generales Extraordinarias, in the name of Ferdinand VII, decreed that those persons living in America who were of African origin and who desired to study the sciences or to study for the priesthood, could register in the university or in the seminaries if they met the requirements needed.

On Nov. 12, 1821, the city council of San Agustin de Laredo signed a contract with Professor Francisco Fernandez to open a school in which he would teach primer, first reader, catechism, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Tuition charges per month were to be **two reales**, to be paid either in cash or with corn and meat. All orphans and those too poor to pay would be taught free. The contract was valid for five years.

While Charles III issued some decrees which affected the education of his subjects, most of the decrees were aimed at curbing the growing power of the ecclesiastical judges. On August 12, 1760, he

prohibited the teachings of the Jesuit school for the good of the vassals and the purity of public education. Again on Sept. 18, 1766, he decreed that it was the duty of the clergy to teach love and respect for the sovereigns and the government, and that they themselves should abstain from commenting unfavorably about the government personnel, which criticism was to be considered treason.

THE SECULAR COURTS

As early as July 27, 1768, the King declared that secular courts were not under obligation to ask permission to get criminals out of the church where they were taken in by the clergy, who refused to turn them over to the courts. The King demanded that such criminals be taken and judged, for the protection of his subjects, but that such criminals were not to be tortured.

But the distance of the colonies from the mother country, and the slow methods of communication, paved the way for abuses. The settlers, though, had the right to take up any matters in which there was any doubt, with higher authorities, and there were several instances in which they did so.

The case of Don Nicolas Campos Castellanos was one in which the justice and the priest struggled over their respective powers. Don Nicolas admitted gambling 119 pesos and 3 reales which belonged to the treasury and requested permit from Don Thomas Sanchez to pay said amount within eight days. Don Nicolas Campos Castellanos claimed that he returned within five days and that Don Thomas Sanchez refused to receive the money, and put him in jail after handcuffing him. He also stated that Don Thomas had sold his livestock and household goods at public auction at less than half their value.

The prisoner escaped from jail and took refuge in the church and the priest, the Reverend Nicolas Gutierrez de Mendoza, had the handcuffs removed. There was much discussion between Don Thomas Sanchez and the priest with regard to the delivering of the prisoner to the civil authorities.

The priest took up the matter with his superior at Guadalajara as to the immunity of Castellanos. Don Thomas advised the governor of the case and Don Nicolas Campos Castellanos also appealed to the governor who pardoned him and set him free, after requesting Don Thomas to give Castellanos the balance of the goods which had been embargoed. The governor commented on the excessive tax which had been placed on the 119 pesos and 3 reales.

Don Thomas Sanchez complied but at the same time requested the removal of the priest saying that he himself would be responsible for paying part of the services of the priest's successor. The governor replied that it would be better if Don Thomas addressed a petition to the bishop, in which all settlers requested the removal of said priest and clearly stating the reasons for such a request.

No record exists of such a petition having been presented to the bishop.

INDIAN ATTACK OF APRIL 17, 1790

In the matter of the defense of the settlement, the priest also took part, though not always successfully. On April 17, 1790, the Reverend Jose Manuel Perez tried his best to have the officer in charge of the soldiers take the necessary precautions for defending the village against the Indians, who had been seen in the immediate vicinity. The priest suggested that the munitions be taken out of the magazine and placed either in the center of the village or in the church itself, for fear that the Indians might take them. He pleaded in vain, notwithstanding the fact that he reminded the officer, Don Claudio Lacomba, that the King paid him to protect the settlers.

Sergeant Devalina and four soldiers with the help of eleven of the settlers went out to scout, and they reported that over one hundred Indians were on their way, singing. The settlers put up a good fight but the Indians were too many. They stole the munitions and danced the **mitote** (war dance) for about an hour, after which they left the village, taking all the horses they found. Depositions taken from the sergeant and his men proved that the recommendations of the priest and of those who reported seeing the Indians near the village had not been heeded. Laredo at that time had a troop of twenty-five soldiers, who, helped by the settlers took care of all the margin of the Rio Grande, approximately 100 leagues. The soldiers were distributed in small groups in the different settlements on both sides of the river.

SOME RECORDS OF THE CHURCH FROM 1789 to 1844

The records of San Agustin church from 1761 to 1789 were lost; therefore there is no information available as to the work performed by the priests up to that period. Book One of Baptism Records from 1789 to 1844, shows among other information, the following:

The first Spanish boy baptized:

Jose M. del Refugio
Mendiola Sanchez.
Espanol.

On Oct. 16 of 1789, in this parochial church of San Agustin de Laredo, I, Don Jose Manuel Perez, Royal Chaplain of this village, solemnly baptized Jose Ma-

ria del Refugio, a Spaniard, at the age of eight days, legal son of Domingo Mendiola and Maria Jesus Sanchez, members of this parish. Sponsors were Manuel Sanchez and Maria Tomasa Sanchez of this village. I advised them of their obligations as spiritual parents, and I hereby affix my signature.

Br. Jose Manuel Perez.

The first Indian boy baptized:

Jose Maria
Indio
Hijo de Rosalia.

On Oct. 23, 1789, in this parochial church of San Agustin de Laredo, I, Don Jose Manuel Perez, Royal Chaplain and priest of this parish, solemnly baptized Jose Maria

(Indian of the Carrizo tribe) eight days of age, illegitimate son of Rosalia, of the same tribe. Sponsors were Victoriano Dovalina and Gertrudis Garcia. I advised them of their obligation and spiritual relationship and I signed.

Br. Jose Manuel Perez.

Father Jose Manuel Perez baptized 927 children from Oct., 1789 to Sept., 1808. From July 14, 1789 to Jan 20, 1844, the total number of children baptized was 4,153.

Book I of Marriages (1790-1858) has the following as the first entry.

Joaquin de Cardenas
with
Juliana Ramon
Spanish.

On Nov. 25, 1790, I, Jose Manuel Perez, parish priest of the Villa de Laredo, married Joaquin de Cardenas, Spaniard, settler of the Villa de Monclova, legal son of Pablo Cardenas and Isabel Tije-

rina, with Juliana Ramon, native of this village and **legitimate** daughter of Don Cristobal Ramon and Dona Juana Mendiola, after the banns had been read three times: on the seventh, the fifteenth, and twenty-second days of this month. The witnesses

were Don Jose Jesus She and Don Blas Gil. I hereby affix my signature.

Br. Jose Manuel Perez.

Another entry shows the marriage of two Indians, members of the **Lobo** tribe (Wolf tribe) :-

Miguel Rodriguez
with
Guillerma Navarro
Lobos.

On the nineteenth day of Jan., 1794, I, the parish priest of this village of Laredo, married Miguel Rodriguez, Indian, native of Candela, now living here, legal son of

Lucas Rodriguez and Marcela Munoz, deceased, with Maria Guillerma Navarro, member of the Lobo tribe, neighbor of this village, legal daughter of Juan Dionicio Navarro and of Maria Martinez, after the banns had been read three times. Witnesses were Juan de Alcantar and Don Blas Gil. I signed.

Br. Jose Manuel Perez.

The Marriage Register, Book I, shows 1,029 marriages performed from Jan. 25, 1790, to Dec. 27, 1857.

The funeral register shows twelve entries for the year 1789, and 407 funerals listed over the signature of Father Jose Manuel Perez, between July 19, 1789, and Aug. 21, 1808.

Book I of Confirmations has the following entry on June 16, 1850:

"List of individuals to whom the sacrament of confirmation was administered by the Very Reverend Don Juan Maria Odin, Bishop of Galveston, in this church of San Agustin de Laredo included in my diocese:

- No. 362— Carlos Gil, son of Onofre Gil and Francisca Garcia
555— Maria Refugia Garcia, daughter of Bartolome Garcia and Carmen Benavides.
602— Higinio Garcia, son of Juan Garcia and Cecilia Gonzalez

(These are only three of the many entries)

As the parish grew and as more ranches were established, the priests were obliged to travel to baptize children or to perform marriages. They were the "saddle-bag" priests. Among the priests who served in Laredo from 1761 to 1857 are:

Reverend Juan Jose de Lafita y Verri	1761—1767
Nicolas de Mendoza Gutierrez	1767—1773
Joseph Leonardo Sanchez	1773—1780
Juan Jose Garza	1780—1782
Alejandro Lozano	1782—
Jose Manuel Perez	1789—1808
Jose Cayetano Gonzalez	1808—1812
Jose Maria Garcia	1812—1832

Jose Trinidad Garcia	1832—1851
Timoteo de Frias	1851—1852
Francisco de Paula Benavides	1852—1857

Father Francisco de Paula Benavides was born in Guerrero. His parents were Don Jesus Benavides Uribe and Dona Matiana Benavides de Palacios.

SAN AGUSTIN DE LAREDO LOYAL TO SPAIN

While Revilla and Dolores were in sympathy with the revolution led by Father Miguel Hidalgo, San Agustin de Laredo remained loyal to Spain. Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara from Revilla was the first diplomat sent by Hidalgo to the United States. The Reverend Juan Jose Vasquez Borrego, son of Capt. Jose Vasquez Borrego, was executed in Chihuahua because he sympathized with Father Miguel Hidalgo.

That San Agustin de Laredo was loyal to Spain is evidenced by letter which Don Jose Antonio Benavides of Laredo sent to Brigadier General Don Felix Maria Calleja del Rey, on August 10, 1811. The letter was sent with soldier Jose Maria Navaira who accompanied the Most Reverend Bishop Primo Feliciano Marin de Porras. Several documents were also sent as proof that the settlers of San Agustin de Laredo were loyal to the King and declared that they were willing to sacrifice their lives in the defense of their beloved King, country, and religion.

Again on August 25, 1811 Don Jose Antonio Benavides wrote to Colonel Joaquin de Arredondo y Mioño advising him that he had organized six companies of volunteers and that he was training them on Sundays. He also requested one hundred guns and one hundred sabres. Lists were sent of the men in the service and of the Indians who declared themselves loyal to the King and were willing to defend His Majesty. Notice of reward offered for the head of Father Hidalgo was posted in Laredo.

On August 27, 1813, the justices of the settlements along the Rio Grande were advised of the victory of General Joaquin de Arredondo at the battle of **Medina** on August 18, 1813. The ecclesiastical judges were advised also and were requested to hold special thanksgiving services with a Te Deum. General Arredondo's report of the battle is as follows:

... I have just obtained a most complete and decisive victory over the enemy from Bexar. It seems that the Lord visibly protected the soldiers of His Majesty because they defend his laws and rights. The enemy received the punishment it deserved in spite of the fact that it attacked us with 3000 soldiers among which were 600 Indians of different tribes, all well armed and well disciplined by Jose Albares de Toledo who used to be lieutenant under Nabio. **The traitor Bernardo Gutierrez** had fled to the United States before the battle took place. The enemy lost seven cannons, munitions, guns, flags, boxes containing war materials, first aid boxes, and more than 600 men killed.

Our losses were 24 dead and about 200 wounded, among the latter some officers. This victory deserves to be announced throughout the country and therefore I request that you publish this notice and send it to all settlements in the province, having the priests offer special services to the Almighty with a Te Deum. Wherever possible have salutes fired. **BATTLEGROUND NEAR MEDINA. August 18, 1813.**

(signed) JOAQUIN DE ARREDONDO.

On June 29, 1815, General Arredondo ordered the confiscation of the property of Bernardo Gutierrez. The money collected from this was to be turned over to Captain Don Miguel Paredes for supporting his troops.

There were several ways in which the settlers raised money to help defray the expenses of the war. General Joaquin Arredondo passed a decree requiring the settlers to pay one percent tax on capital free from debt. Said decree was issued on June 26, 1815 and published by Don Jose Maria de Tovar, alcalde of Laredo. A previous decree required the settlers to pay a ten percent tax annually on houses rented, five percent was to be paid by the owner and five percent by the tenant. The clergy contributed magnificently. They gave all the silver and gold articles of the church, except the sacred vessels needed for the sacrifice of the Mass.

Commanding officer Ramon Perez complained to the Justice of Laredo that some of the Indian girls serving in homes were ill treated. He cited the case of Juliana, Carrizo Indian, who had been beaten and placed in the stocks, and he demanded that she be taken from the stocks. Don Jose Maria Tovar, alcalde of Laredo, replied that Don Ramon Perez had no authority to give orders in this case, because there were two alcaldes, one for the "gente de razón" and one for the Indians.

Previously some of the servants had complained to General Arredondo and in the case of Victoriana, General Arredondo himself wrote to Don Jose Maria Tovar informing him that Victoriana Garay could pay the ninety-two pesos which she owed, in small monthly payments, but without the obligation of working for her former employers. It would be better if she worked where she would be sure of getting a salary, the general further stated.

On the other hand, Father Jose Cayetano Gonzalez, on July 15, 1812, requested the freedom of two servants who had robbed him of over two hundred pesos. These servants went to Revilla and there spent the money during the festivities held in honor of St. John the Baptist. Father Gonzalez employed them again.

In general, the settlers were very religious and lived in accordance with the commandments of the Church as is evidenced by their last wills and testaments two of which are cited in the following chapter. The beauty of the language used in these testaments reveals the profound influence of the Church in their everyday living.

LAST WILLS OF SALVADOR GONZALEZ YDALGO AND JOSE MARIA BENAVIDES

Don Thomas Sanchez, Don Joseph Miguel Pas and Don Emeterio de Bustamante witnessed the last will of Don Salvador Gonzalez, one of the first aldermen of San Agustin de Laredo. The will reads in part, as follows:

In the name of God and of the Holy Virgin conceived without sin, I request that this testament be written. I, Salvador Gonzalez Ydalgo, settler of this village, being sick and aware that death is near, but being in my right mind, believing and venerating the mystery of the Holy Trinity as taught by the Catholic Church, whose son I am, and wishing to save my soul, I dictate the following:

1. I commend my soul to God, and my body to the earth.
 2. When I die, my body is to be buried in the church of this village, next to the grave of my son Joseph, and it is my desire that my body be shrouded with the habit of St. Francis.
 3. I request that my funeral be a simple one and that a requiem Mass be celebrated.
 4. I also request that nine Masses be said for the repose of my soul and that the church bell be tolled.
 5. Six more Masses must be said for penances which I may not have complied with.
 6. Two more Masses for restitutions which I may have forgotten to make.
 7. I leave to Diego Saucedo one hundred goats for the benefit of the poor souls in purgatory.
 8. I leave thirty sheep and twenty goats, which I delivered some time ago to the priest, for the purpose of building an altar for the poor souls. The priest told me he had leased the sheep and goats to Don Cayetano de la Garza.
- I declare that I married Dona Anna Maria Lozano and that we brought up the following children: Maria Eulalia, Joseph, Maria Manuela, Salvador, Joseph Luis, Juan Joseph, Maria Gertrudis, Maria Josepha, Maria de la Trinidad, and Joseph Alexandre, of whom three boys and four girls are now living, and for each of whom I have provided a dowry. I name my children and my wife as my legitimate heirs with my last blessing.

On June 7, 1779, Don Joseph Leonardo Sanchez Navarro, priest, accompanied the widow of Salvador Gonzalez Ydalgo and the executors of the estate to the house of the justice, and requested that the will of Salvador Gonzalez be complied with in order that their "consciences might be clear." The deceased must have owned considerable property for only a part of it was divided among the heirs in 1779. The balance was evaluated in 1823, after Spain had lost her colonies. In 1823 the priest was Don Jose Maria Garcia and he issued a receipt which reads as follows:

I received from the executor, Don Jose Antonio Garcia Davila, twenty varas of land, part of the lot owned by Dona Maria

Josepha Sanchez, which deed is in my possession, for twelve Masses which I obligate myself to apply in favor of the souls of Don Salvador Gonzalez, Dona Anna Maria Lozano, and their children, which was decided by the heirs of the deceased, and I hereby affix my signature in the Villa de Laredo on Oct. 27, 1827.

Jose Maria Garcia
Rubric.

During the time that San Agustin de Laredo was a part of Spain, no land was deeded to the clergy.

On July 26, 1811, Don Jose Maria Benavides made his last will at Nacogdoches and in the presence of Don Juan Cantu, and militiaman Yldefonso Garcia, and soldier Jose Pineda of Bexar. Don Jose Maria Benavides was the legal son of Don Cristobal Benavides and Dona Rita Cuellar. His legitimate heirs were his wife, Maria Petra Sanchez, and his children: Maria Tomasa, Maria de Jesus, Joseph Cristobal, Maria Rita, Joseph de Jesus, Joseph Felipe Joseph Basilio and Maria del Patrocinio. The executors named were Dona Maria Petra Sanchez, Don Fernando Garcia and Cristobal Benavides.



HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP VERDAGUER

(This copy was made from a photograph taken in Los Angeles)

Courtesy of Mrs. Frances Westrup

DON PEDRO VERDAGUER, VICAR APOSTOLIC

San Agustin Church is still in the same block where the Spaniards built it. It was rebuilt under the direction of Father Alphonse Souchon about 1875 and was decorated during the time that the Reverend Benito Gcnazlez and Pedro Bernacla worked in Laredo, 1918 to 1924. It was remodeled in 1945 and in 1953 it was completely air-conditioned. In San Agustin plaza, just across from the church, is a monument erected in memory of Don Joseph de Escandon, under whose guidance Nuevo Santander was settled. The marker was granted by the State during the Texas Centennial. San Agustin Church was the only Catholic house of worship until the Right Reverend Pedro Verdaguer established his residence in Laredo as Vicar Apostolic of Brownsville. Then San Agustin became the cathedral.

Don Pedro Verdaguer was born at San Pedro de Torello, Cataluña, Spain on Dec. 10, 1835. He studied in the United States and was ordained on Dec. 12, 1862. in **San Francisco, California**. He worked among the Indians in that state for a long time and was pastor of the church of "Our Lady of the Angels" in Los Angeles, when he was nominated to the vicariate of Brownsville.

He was consecrated as Titular Bishop of Aulon at Barcelona, Spain, on Nov. 9, 1890, and while there he requested permission to go from place to place looking for young seminarians and soliciting means for their transportation to America. He was well aware of the needs of his vicariate, and he planned to improve it. When he left Barcelona on April of 1891, he brought with him six students, whom he sent to the Seminary of Cape Girardeau, St. Joseph, Missouri, and later to Victoria, Texas, where they finished their studies. These students were Fathers Luis Plana, Ramon Menclus, Benito Donada, Miguel Puig, and Emilio Illa.

Bishop Verdaguer took formal possession of his vicariate at Corpus Christi on May 21, 1891, but no residence to suit his needs was available, so he decided to move to Laredo. At that time Laredo had a greater population than Corpus Christi and a better place for the Bishop to live in. He left Corpus Christi on Aug. 31, 1892, and whenever he returned for confirmations he liked to stay in his old house in Corpus Christi.

If it had not been for the aid given him by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, he could not have been able to build churches, support the priests and furnish transportation across the sea for the nuns and priests. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith is an international association which was founded in May 3, 1822. The aim of the Society is to assist the Catholic missionary priests, brothers, and nuns by prayers and alms. There are two general councils for the Propagation of the Faith, one in Lyons, and one in Paris, France. Each council is composed of twelve clergymen and twelve laymen of business ability. Although contributions may be five or ten cents per individual, the amount contributed to the general fund by the Catholics in the United States for the year 1928 amounted to \$1,270,000.

A letter which Bishop Verdaguer wrote in reply to a request from a priest who wished to be admitted into the vicariate will show how poor the vicariate of Brownsville was. The letter read, in part, as follows:

... should you speak and preach English well, having good testimonials, and be willing to submit yourself to a poor mission life, in my most poor vicariate, you may come, subject to the Decree of the Third Council of Baltimore . . . Were I in better circumstances, I would have all the priests I would desire, but the vicariate is poor, very poor, so much so that even in Laredo the best parish, the priests cannot have a regular monthly salary, some months they get ten dollars, some eight, some five, but never more than ten.

(signed) Peter Verdaguer,
Vicar Apostolic of Brownsville.

Very soon after establishing his residence in Laredo, Bishop Verdaguer began his visitations. He made his first pastoral visit to Brownsville in 1892. He realized the need for more priests. While on a trip to Rome in 1905 he brought several young priests for the Texas churches. Among them were the Reverend Juan Cema, Jose Coma Juan Canales, John Solsona, and Jose Oliva. Father Canales was executed in Spain in 1938 by the Loyalist while on leave of absence to recover his health.

The Bishop was noted for his love for the people of his vicariate. He liked to visit them, for he believed that they wanted to hear their bishop. He was called "El Obispo Ranchero" (the bishop of the stockmen). Mrs. Kate Dougherty Bluntzer recalls that she was visiting her mother at Round Lake with her six-months old daughter Katharine when the Bishop came to confirm. While Father Haney went to the Leahy Ranch to baptize Edward Leahy, the Bishop stayed at Round Lake, and Mrs. Bluntzer had to entertain him. She remembers that he was a very kind man and that he praised the excellent work that the United States was doing at that time to control the dreaded yellow fever. Asked why he wore a beard, he replied that he had had a very bad case of pneumonia and his chest had been left very weak. He was a handsome man with flashing dark eyes and heavy black hair, and he looked more like a poet than a priest.

One of the teachers in Corpus Christi had been shocked when she heard that the Pope had changed the age of children, making their first communion, from ten years to seven, and she had much to say on the subject. Evidently the Bishop had heard about her comments, for when she walked into the church where he was to confirm, he sat down just inside the rail and gave quite a sermon about those who criticized the Pope's judgment.

Mrs. Joe Sullivan, a descendant of Peter Bluntzer who came to Texas during the time of the Republic, was confirmed by Bishop Verdaguer in the old St. Patrick's church in Corpus Christi when she was fourteen years old. Then he married her to Joe Sullivan on Aug. 17, 1903. It was quite a wedding and the Bishop was very gracious. The couple went to live on a ranch in Bee County, not far from Chiltipin

Creek where there was a settlement of Mexicans. They did not see the Bishop again until 1907, and by that time they had two babies. He arrived at their place in a big covered hack with a Mexican driver. Father Puig and two other priests drove up from San Patricio, and by sundown the Mexicans were camping by hundreds on the creek.

The next morning Mass was said in Mrs. Sullivan's living room and as there was not space for all, some just locked in. After Mass, seven babies were baptized and then the parents came up, a couple at a time, to be remarried. Shortly after dinner the Bishop confirmed 300 Mexicans and one American girl who was visiting Mrs. Sullivan. The confirmation took place in the front yard which was the only place that could accomodate such a crowd.

The Bishop was a visitor several times at the home of Don Teodoro Garcia in Webb County. Mr. Garcia and the cowboys rode to meet the Bishop and the priests who accompanied him, at a place about one mile from the ranch. When the carriages approached, the cowboys fired a salute. Bishop Verdaguer descended from his carriage and blessed everyone; he even blessed the fields along the way. The inhabitants waited for him in the large living room, where an altar had been put up, to receive his blessing and to hear his words of religion. During the night services the priests led the people in singing and afterwards the Bishop preached. He usually stayed three or four days and it was evident that he loved the peaceful life in the country and enjoyed the simple but hearty meals served.

He was very fond of children, and he saw that there were sufficient ladies to help teach the catechism to the hundreds of boys and girls being prepared to receive their first communion in Laredo. The altars were beautifully adorned for such an important occasion. Father Emilio Illa led the procession of children from the plaza to the church, the children singing with him. After communion, the children were taken to the dining room of the parish hall and breakfast was served while the orchestra played in the patio. Among the ladies who worked faithfully in instructing the children was the beloved Mrs. Julianita B. Leyendecker, widow of Captain John Z. Leyendecker, who once had served in the Confederate Army. Her daughters, Elizabeth and Lucy, also helped in teaching.

Up to the year 1896 all the Catholics in Laredo attended services at San Agustin Church, and at the eight o'clock Mass the sermon was preached in English for the benefit of the Anglo-Americans. The Bishop realized that they had to come quite a distance to attend Mass so he had a church built especially for them. This church was built in 1896 and he blessed it and named it St. Peter's. The Reverend Edward Russell Chase met Bishop Verdaguer in Galveston and was persuaded to come to Laredo and take care of the Anglo-American Catholics. In 1907, Father Chase applied for Army Chaplaincy and was sent to the Philippines. The Reverend Joseph B. Illig, one of the most zealous of



Mrs. Julianita B. Leyendecker, direct descendant of Capt. Thomas Sanchez and widow of Capt. John Z. Leyendecker of the Confederate Army. Mrs. Leyendecker was a very zealous Catholic and taught hundreds of children at St. Agustin Church, preparing them to receive Holy Communion.

St. Peter's priests, ministered from 1907 to 1908. It is said that he liked to visit his parishioners.

To better serve the people living in the northern section of Laredo, the Bishop built Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in 1899. The Academy of Our Lady of Guadalupe was opened under the care of the Sisters of the Holy Ghost. The Bishop visited the school often and made awards to the pupils who excelled in certain studies. He was particularly interested in drawing and penmanship.

He showed interest not only in the education of those children who could afford to pay but also of those unable to do so. In 1904 the Orphan Asylum for girls was built and a group of nuns who came from Mexico took care of the girls and educated them. This congregation is known as the Servants of the sacred Heart of Jesus and the Poor. The members worked hard to take care of the girls, and in order to support them the nuns went from house to house soliciting contributions. Many years later ladies from civic clubs took interest in the work the nuns were doing and arranged for the county and the city to furnish funds regularly. These ladies furnished the bedrooms of the girls properly and helped the nuns to prepare the girls for a better life.

The foundress of the Orphanage for Girls was Sister Maria Josefina Rivera Rosas and she had five Sisters to help her. They receive girls from four years of age up, and have permission to take in as many as sixty. In the early part of 1953 they had forty-three girls and they instruct them not only in religion, but also in Spanish and English, up to the eighth grade. Some of the girls have done high school work at the Ursuline Academy. This institution is now called the Sacred Heart Home for Girls.

The Ursuline Community of Laredo was founded in 1868. At the request of Bishop Dubuis of Galveston, Mother St. Joseph Aubert was induced to establish a teaching community of Sisters in Laredo. She and Sister Teresa Pereida, lent by the Galveston Community, came to Laredo by way of Corpus Christi, arriving on May 30, 1868. They started teaching as soon as they found lodging. Father Alphonse Souchon and Father Neraz helped to build the convent, and on March 30, 1869, the two religious women were installed in their home. The community grew steadily, but when Bishop Verdaguer arrived he made some changes, one of which to uncloister the Ursulines. He was of the opinion that the exigencies of the times required that the Sisters keep up with the outside world. Therefore the nuns had to attend services at San Agustin Church instead of having a priest celebrate Mass at their convent. The Laredo home of the Ursulines had been founded as a strictly cloistered monastery. They had not gone outside of their convent until the Bishop required that they do so.

The system of educating girls at the Ursuline Academy has a two-fold purpose: to prepare them to meet the demands made upon them by modern, social, and economic life, and to train them to live in conformity with the will of God.

Bishop Verdaguer thought of merciful healing too and in 1894 he invited the Sisters of Mercy from Refugio to come to Laredo. They



Residence of the late Rev. Bishop Verdaguer



Tomb of Bishop Verdaguer

selected the former J. P. Flynn residence at 1320 Rosario St. for the location of the hospital. The late Mother Clare, who was Superior in Refugio at that time, came to Laredo accompanied by Sister Mary Xavier and Miss Nora Stephen, who later became Sister M. de Sales. They opened a small hospital of ten beds. During the first five years they had only an occasional patient, but within six years they purchased the Steffian home and during the following year they took care of about eighty patients. In 1902 they made one extension, and during that year 664 patients were cared for. The next extension was made in 1915, and 1,640 patients were admitted that year. Although many of the patients were charity cases, the merchants of Laredo made monthly donations and helped the Sisters carry on their work.

For several years Mercy Hospital had a novitiate. Sisters from the different states and from Canada, as well as from Ireland, entered and were trained as teachers and as nurses. Some of the Sisters taught in the schools in the Rio Grande Valley, at Penitas, Mercedes, Mission, McAllen, Roma, Rio Grande, Harlingen, Refugio, and Goliad. The nurses went to Mercy Hospital in Brownsville. The central novitiate was later moved to Webster Groves, Missouri.

On Oct. 16, 1949, the Sisters of Mercy celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the present Mercy Hospital. Plans were made in 1950 for a new hospital to be built on the heights and the new Mercy Hospital is a splendid asset to the city of Laredo. There are now fifteen Sisters of Mercy who supervise, as there are both registered and practical secular nurses on duty.

Mercy Hospital is not conducted for profit, and it is not conducted for the doctors, nurses, and technicians, but it provides the means whereby they may better serve the patients. It is modern in every detail.

The medical staff members at present include the following:

ACTIVE

F. M. Canseco
J. G. Cigarroa, Sr.
J. G. Cigarroa, Jr.
L. G. Cigarroa
M. G. Cigarroa
Raul de la Garza
O. L. Elizondo
George Garcia
J. C. Gomez Rejon
F. Gonzalez
A. C. King
J. T. Lowry

Ruby Lowry
M. E. Malakoff
J. J. Mata
L. Montalvo
G. E. Penny
W. R. Powell
V. Puig
G. Perez Gil
J. S. Reitman
Max Rottenstein
Blanca Gonzalez

176093 5

COURTESY

G. M. Canales
S. Glanz
R. A. Munslow
E. M. Longoria
W. Sawtelle
C. Hulse
R. T. Snip

DENTISTS

G. Longoria
A. McCullough
S. T. Peterson
J. G. Schneidler
L. A. Wright.

The following table shows work carried on in the hospital:

For twelve month period ending Sept. 30,	1952.....	1962
Total births (live babies born)	1215.....	2002
Total patients admitted	4748.....	10001
Average daily census of patients in the hospital	59.....	123

The hospital provides employment for hundreds of persons, professional and non-professional. The statistics show the following pay-rolls:

	1952	1962
Average monthly	\$10,983.000.....	\$56,000.00

But it must not be thought that the Bishop took care of Laredo only. In Beeville, St. Mary's Academy was established under the direction of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Spohn Hospital was also built in Corpus Christi, and new parishes with resident priests were established in Alice, Goliad, Kingsville, Mercedes, Mission, Riviera, Rockport, San Benito and Skidmore.

To meet the needs of the Catholics of the western section of the city of Laredo, the Holy Redeemer Church was built in 1909, a gift from a Catholic from the northern part of the United States.

Bishop Verdaguer was a great missionary to the last. Although not very strong, he insisted on going out on a tour of confirmation and he died en route, near Mercedes, on Oct. 26, 1911. His body rests in a beautiful little chapel in the Catholic cemetery in Laredo. After his death, San Agustin was no longer a cathedral, but the descendants of the original settlers still worship at San Agustin one of the most beautiful churches in the South - a permanent sentinel that has witnessed much human venture.

CHAPTER XIV

Growth of the Church in Laredo from 1912 to 1962

Don Pedro Verdaguer laid the foundation for further growth of the Catholic Church in Laredo. When the Bishop died Father Jose Coma became the pastor of San Agustin Church. He and Father Ramon and Father Illa ministered to the needs of the parish of San Agustin until 1918, when the Passionist priests Benito Gonzalez and Peter Bernaola came to Laredo.

The Passionist Fathers visited the neighboring ranches and instructed the children in the Catholic doctrine. Father Bernaola was loved by the people for his kindness. He was interested not only in the people who lived in the country but also in the teachers who had to live among them.

In 1920 the Reverend Father Fidelis Muinelo, C. P., worked hard with the members of the Mothers' Club to have women from all the parishes in the city join a national organization, The Catholic Daughters of America. As a result of their efforts Court Isabella the Catholic No. 683 was organized on Sept. 4, 1921. The class had a membership of eighty-nine and Mrs. A. J. LeBlanc, then the first district deputy in Texas, presided. Mrs. V. L. Puig, Sr. was the first Grand Regent and she presided from 1921 to 1925. Court of Isabella the Catholic No. 683 has joined the National Council of Catholic women and thereby enlarged the scope of work to be accomplished.

The main aims of the organization are to encourage the moral and intellectual improvement of its members, and to make the less fortunate people happy. This last named aim includes giving food and milk to the poor and entertaining the "shut-ins". Applicants for membership are investigated by a committee of three members for moral and religious ways of living. The main office of the Catholic Daughters of America is in New York City, and the official publication is called **The Catholic Daughters of America Herald**. The society was founded in 1903 by the Knights of Columbus to propagate and preserve the Faith among Catholic women and to protect Catholic girls.

The Knights of Columbus is a fraternal benefit society for Catholic men. It was founded in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1882 for the purpose of developing a practical Catholicity among its members. for promoting education and charity, and for furnishing financial aid to the families of deceased members, by means of its insurance department. The Knights of Columbus society was organized by Father Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Connecticut, at the appeal of a Hartford Bishop. It resulted in a Catholic society that would appeal to all Catholic men and with the economic features of the Mutual benefit groups. Its name, Knights of Columbus, established it as distinctively American.

The first decade, from 1882 to 1892, was one of slow growth, then the Order moved westward and with the expansion came the deve-

lopment of intermediate jurisdiction, that is, the State Councils. Soon chapters were organized not only throughout the United States, but also in Canada, the Philippine Islands, Mexico, Panama, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

When the Knights of Columbus were organized, insurance was expensive and the average working man could not afford it, but through the activities of the Order, insurance to provide death benefits and the help furnished by the Sick and Vigil Committees were of great aid to the members. As hospital facilities became more easily available to the average citizen, the functions of the Sick and Vigil Committees have become of less importance. Lately Catholic Action, (action by the Catholic laity), through the Knights of Columbus has developed Blood Donor Groups in the Councils. They have provided free beds in hospitals and sanitariums for members of their families.

In the realm of education, the Knights of Columbus have established scholarships to high schools so that the children of members may attain a better station in life. A chair of American history was established in the Catholic University of America. Scholarships to colleges are awarded to talented students and grants are made to seminaries for the training of priests. To offset the dangers of Communism, the Fourth Degree Order of the Knights of Columbus was instituted. This is known as the Patriotic Degree, with proper loyalty to country and true loyalty to God as the main aims. The Order has also worked diligently to combat religious and racial prejudices. The publication of monographs which show the contributions made to American life and culture by minority groups has been subsidized by the Knights of Columbus.

Realizing the need of uniting a group of Catholic men in Laredo, Pedro Mayo, Edward H. Corrigan, the late B. J. Leyendecker, and the late Doctors E. H. Sauvignet and Francisco R. Canseco, met in May, 1921, to formulate plans to secure a charter. Formal presentation of the charter for Laredo Council No. 2304 of the Knights of Columbus was made on June 19, 1921. June 19 was selected as the date for the presentation of the charter as a tribute to Mrs. Julianita B. Leyendecker, this being her birthday anniversary. Mrs. Leyendecker was the mother of the late B. J. Leyendecker, the first Grand Knight of Laredo Council No. 2304.

Laredo Council No. 2304, Knights of Columbus has accomplished a large amount of valuable work. The sponsoring of annual retreats for the members is one of the projects. A retreat was held at St. Joseph's Academy on May 24, 1953, with Father Spiegler as retreat master. About 130 men attended. In connection with the Laredo Americanism Committee, the Council held a party for the August, 1952, inductees to the Armed Services. Several jamaicas (bazaars) were held for the benefit of the different churches in the city. During 1953, Council No. 2304 was asked to join in many civic projects.

The orphans of the city are not forgotten by the Knights of Columbus. On Thanksgiving and on Christmas Day they have provided cheer for many little girls and little boys from the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph Homes.

The fraternal activities include memorial services, regular visits to the sick by special committees, and the furnishing of blood by donor groups for members and their families. The old Murphy home on Houston Street was purchased and repaired. It is used as the meeting hall for the Council.

During the administration of Grand Knight Arnulfo Zamora, from July 4, 1951, to June 30, 1953, eight initiations were held with a total of 183 new members and reinstatements joining the Council. Under his guidance the local Council worked successfully for charity, unity, patriotism, and fraternity, all for the love of God.

San Agustin Church has a very active club for men called Sociedad del Santo Nombre (Holy Name Society). A man seeking membership in this society must have more than the mere desire to belong. He must be willing to attend church very regularly. When he is received into the society, he is a member in perpetuity, unless he is dismissed for some reason according to the law. This, however, is an unusual event. The primary purpose of the society is spiritual. It is a national society and the emblem is an insigne of the head of the Christ-Child.

The Holy Name pledge starts with praise for God, for His Holy Name, and for His Son, and acceptance of all doctrines which the Church teaches. As it is impossible to be a good Catholic without being a good citizen, the pledge promises civil obedience and loyalty to our flag by all the Holy Name men.

The loyalties of the members of this society are as follows:
BECAUSE

There is a land which gives me freedom and liberty;

There is a church which comforts and consoles me;

There is a God who gives me life and preserves it;

AND BECAUSE

The forces of Communism would despoil me of my constitutional rights;

The powers of irreligion and impiety would destroy my church;

The principles of atheistic philosophies would rob me of my God;

I PROMISE AND I PLEDGE AS A HOLY NAME MAN

To uphold the Constitution of these United States;

To defend the rights of the Roman Catholic Church;

To dedicate my life to the services of my God.

These pledges and promises, if need be, I will seal with my life's blood.

They attend Mass, as a group the second Sunday of every month. Although appreciative of civic and social activities, the members are primarily interested in those activities which will help them to attain personal sanctification. They serve as ushers during Mass on Sundays and on special holidays. Every now and then the Club puts over money-raising activities for charity.

In 1927 San Agustin Parochial School, auditorium and convent were built as a unit at a cost of \$100,000.00. The school opened with

an enrollment of 500 children. Father Jesus Prieto, O.M.I., was rector when the school was built. The Sisters of Divine Providence teach there. "Sisters" is a title used to designate the members of community of religious women devoted to spiritual and charitable work and bound by vows. The Sisters of Divine Providence of St.-Jean-de Basel was founded in 1889, at Covington, Kentucky, by three Sisters from the general mother-house at St.-Jean-de Basel for the Christian education of youth in America. This year, the enrollment at San Agustin Parochial School is 525 including elementary and high school pupils.

In 1925, Plutarco Elias Calles, president of Mexico, began to enforce the laws of the Constitution of 1917 which denied all rights to the Catholic Church. Persecution and deportation were the means employed. It was during this religious persecution that the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and of the Poor opened a day nursery in Laredo, on August, 1926. This helped the women who had to work, as they could leave their children with the Sisters during the day. The children were taught the elementary subjects, religion, and needlework.

Later, these Sisters of the Sacred Heart and of the Poor conducted St. Joseph's Home for boys. This building was on the banks of the Rio Grande. The County and the Community Chest contributed to the support of the institution. Now the Sisters and the boys have moved to the Sacred Heart Home on the heights. Seventy-six boys and girls are being cared for at present. There is a bus to take the children to different schools in the city for their instruction.

On March 9, 1935, the Salesian Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians and St. John Bosco established their house in Laredo. Their convent is certainly an asset to the city. The Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was founded by St. John Bosco. The first profession took place on August 5 1872, in Mornese, Italy. Fifteen Sisters among whom was St. Mary Maxarello, the Cofoundress of the Congregation, received the religious habit from the hands of St. John Bosco.

The special mission of the Salesian Sisters is the Christian education of youth. They have establishments in Europe, Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and in North America. The mother house is in Turin, Italy. The Congregation is composed of over fifteen thousand Sisters, with fifty-two provincial houses, several novitiates, and more than one thousand convent schools.

Mary Help of Christians School is situated at 1717 Houston Street, but plans have already been approved for a \$400 000. school to be built soon. The present enrollment in this academy is 630.

The Salesian Sisters also teach in Holy Redeemer's Parochial School, and conduct catechetical centers in some other churches.

St. Joseph's Academy is a Catholic school for boys, under the direction of the Marist Brothers. This religious order is dedicated to the education of boys. The Academy is affiliated with the State Department of Education and offers complete courses in intermediate, junior and high school courses. Active participation in sports is afforded by the

ample playgrounds and spacious gymnasium. The Academy was founded in 1937. At present, Brother Luke is the director. The total enrollment as of November, 1962 is 345.

Ursuline Academy was moved from the banks of the Rio Grande to the heights. Complete courses in elementary, intermediate and high school studies are offered. There is also a kindergarten department.

St. Peter's Parochial School was started in 1925 while the Reverend Monsignor J. C. Dubourgel was pastor at St. Peter's Church. Father Basso was director of the school, one of the best elementary schools in Laredo. Sister Mary Cornelia who taught the first grade, was considered the best primary teacher in Laredo.

In 1932 a suitable rectory was acquired. Monsignor Dan Laning and Father Doyle were tireless workers for the good of the young members of the parish, especially the boys. They had basketball, tennis, and badminton courts built so that the boys had recreation facilities available all the time. A very modern school has been built on the same place and it takes care of the children living in the western part of the city.

The Right Rev. Monsignor John J. Lannon was Dean of the Laredo Catholic clergy in 1953 and he resided at St. Peter's Rectory. Assisting Monsignor Lannon were the Reverend Fathers Jones and Burke who did a wonderful job of working for the good of the teenagers.

At present, the Reverend Kevin Dunne is the rector of St. Peter's as well as Dean of the Catholic Clergy in Laredo. Father Thomas Patrick McGettrick is his assistant. The parish is composed of 328 families. The parochial school has an enrollment of 309 students, from first through eighth grades.

On April 8, 1953, Monsignor Lannon announced the creation of two new parishes in Laredo. In a division of Laredo's old parish, San Agustin, two new Spanish-speaking parishes were formed: CRISTO REY and SAN JOSE. Father Edward B. Postert, O. M. I. is the pastor now at Cristo Rey. There are 850 families in this parish and a school is conducted for the first and second grades. The enrollment this year is 80. (This number includes kindergarten pupils)

San Jose Church is on Meadow St. and has a membership of 325 families. About 100 more families attend services at San Jose part of the time as they have to go north in search of work during the year. The Reverend L. M. Roque, O.M.I., is the pastor.

Several years ago, Father Charles Taylor served at San Jose Church. He is a native of this diocese, having been born in Beeville. He was baptized in the Episcopal Church but was later received into the Catholic Church by Monsignor Jaillet. He was then confirmed by the late Bishop Verdaguer. Father Taylor was very kind to his parishioners.

Two other churches have been built to accomodate the large Catholic population of the city, San Francisco de Javier on the western section of the city, and San Luis Rey on the northeastern part. San Francisco de Javier is a filial of San Agustin Church, therefore a priest from San Agustin ministers to the faithful.

San Luis Rey Church is a beautiful building with a lovely facade. A nice rectory has been built recently. Twelve hundred families belong to this parish which is ministered to by the Reverend Father John Jones. Father Jones is a tireless worker for the good of his parish. He is and always has been greatly interested in the welfare of young boys and girls. As yet no parochial school has been established in San Luis Rey but recently the Convent of the Sisters of Mary and Joseph was established in this parish. It is the first convent of this type in Laredo and the community is bound to benefit greatly as the Sisters are social and catechetical workers. Their mother house is in Madrid, Spain.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church formerly had a convent and boarding school conducted by the Sisters of the Holy Ghost. At one time this convent had as many as 300 students. In 1922 the Ursuline Sisters took over as teachers and the convent became a parochial school. The present enrollment is 370 students from first through eighth grades.

The children of Guadalupe parish are encouraged to join clubs conducted especially for them. When the girls make their first holy communion, they join the "Teresitas" and the priest instructs them when they meet. When they reach the age of fourteen, they may join the Catholic Youth Organization which is open to both boys and girls.

The Reverend Esteban de Anta is the pastor of Guadalupe Church and Father Kistner and Father Fogarty work with him to serve a parish of 3500 families. Father De Anta is not only a brilliant preacher, he is also a poet.

Holy Redeemer Church was built in 1907 and rebuilt in 1933. A two-story rectory was added. Up to 1949 the work carried on in the parish was the same as usual but with the coming of Father O'Connor in October, 1949, the parish became the happiest and most active in Laredo through the many changes innovated by Father O'Connor. He was convinced that in the big parishes the only solution to many problems is a more active participation of the laity in the work of the church. This is known as Catholic Action. To get a good number of leaders to help, he had a pet project of getting groups of boys and girls and instructing them in leadership about their faith and religion. He would celebrate a special Mass for the members of his parish who graduate from the public school. One spring, one hundred four graduates attended Mass in their caps and gowns.

Although he felt the need of teen-age organizations to include both boys and girls, he was handicapped by lack of a suitable hall or auditorium. However, he organized several societies in which the members are very active workers, such as the Men's Club. Another unique innovation by Father O'Connor was the Credit Union. It was started to

help the people economically as it encourages poor people to save as much as they can, and enables the members to borrow money at a very low rate of interest. The Credit Union is owned and democratically controlled by its membership.

The present pastor at Holy Redeemer is the Reverend Augustine Perez, O.M.I. The total membership of the parish is approximately 5000 and a school is being conducted by the Salesian Sisters for about 200 children of the parish.

In the northern section of the heights, Blessed Sacrament Church was built to take care of a parish composed of about 275 families. There are now 600 families in the parish. Monsignor George Gloeckner is the pastor. Church societies include the Men's Club, Altar Society, Altar Boys Club, and the Catholic Youth Organization. Father Gloeckner is also interested in the work carried on in the Boys' Club of Laredo, which is a city-wide organization of boys from all denominations. Enrollment at Blessed Sacrament School for 1962 is about 269.

The Catholic Church has kept pace with the changing conditions in American society. As the city of Laredo has grown, the Catholic Church has broadened its scope of work to keep up with the needs of its members. It has unified the members of the parishes, it has worked tirelessly for the spiritual guidance of the parishioners, for the education of the children through the cooperative action of the Bishop, priests, and laymen. It has always stressed the need of good citizenship under our democratic government.

When San Agustin de Laredo was founded in 1755 by the Spaniards, the Catholic population consisted of four families. Within two years the population consisted of eleven families and four single men, a total of seventy-two Catholics. By the time the more permanent church was built, in 1778, the population was 200. In 1953, one hundred ninety-eight years after the town was founded, the Catholic population had increased to approximately 45,000. Besides the rebuilding of San Agustin Church, nine additional churches have been built to take care of the faithful, and ten Catholic schools take care of the education of the children. Mother Cabrini Church in the Northwestern part of Laredo serves about 1000 families. Father Romanato is the pastor.

The Catholic scholastic census in Laredo for the 1962-63 year is as follows:

Parochial Schools	
San Agustin (approximately)	525
Holy Redeemer	200
Guadalupe	370
St. Peter's	309
Blessed Sacrament	269
Cristo Rey	80
Mother Cabrini	95
Academies	
Mary Help of Christians	630
Ursuline	582

St. Joseph's	345
Total.....	3405

The public school census for the city of Laredo for 1962 was 18,993. The total enrollment in the public schools for the year 1962/63 as of Oct. 12, 1962 is 13,139. As the migratory families return to Laredo the public schools will necessarily have a larger enrollment. From these figures it is evident that 17.9 percent of the scholastic population of Laredo are attending Catholic schools.

In 1955 the city of Laredo celebrated the two-hundredth anniversary of its founding. The students of Don Thomas Elementary School celebrated the event with a colorful pageant under the direction of the writer.

The settlement at Dolores is just a memory. Revilla was submerged and its inhabitants moved to a new place but they have with them sweet memories of a glorious past. San Ygnacio, home of cultured people, still clings to its historical past. These people love and are proud of the homes of their ancestors and with good reason. The sun dial put up by Jose Villarreal in 1851, still marks time for them. Sweet San Ygnacio.

But San Agustin de Laredo has grown into a large city. The dreams of Colonel Escandon and of the Reverend Juan Jose de Lafita y Veri, first priest to work in Laredo, have been realized. The Catholic Church in Laredo has worked and is working to develop better Christians and better citizens.

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